

Plum Creek Timber Company

# Grazing Best Management Practices

---

## Overview

This document outlines Plum Creek's Grazing Best Management Practices (BMPs), which set policies to conduct grazing in an environmentally sensitive manner. The grazing BMPs are intended to fulfill obligations under the federal Clean Water Act. They are also a part of Plum Creek's Native Fish Habitat Conservation Plan (NFHCP) that is being developed under the federal Endangered Species Act.

To develop these grazing BMPs, Plum Creek relied on input from individuals in the following organizations:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- Plum Creek grazing leaseholders
- Montana Stockgrower's Association
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- University of Montana Riparian Wetland Research Program

## Key Points

Key components of Plum Creek's Grazing BMPs are as follows:

- Performance Standards
- Range Management Planning
- Monitoring
- End of Year Reporting

## Supporting Technical Information

The grazing BMPs are set up to continuously feed new information into the land management process, and adjust

management and policy as needed. First, minimum environmental **performance standards** are set for Plum Creek property. Then, grazing leaseholders must develop annual **range management plans (RMPs)** that describe the management system to be used to achieve, or lead to attainment, of the performance standards. Next, **monitoring** is conducted of riparian conditions at several sensitive locations to measure progress. Finally, an **end of year report** is developed by the leaseholder that describes which environmental measures worked well and which measures require modification in the next year to improve environmental conditions.

## Performance Standards

Performance standards are intended to provide a measuring stick for environmental compliance. These standards are summarized briefly below:

- **Streambank stability:** Disturb no more than 10 percent of streambanks.
- **Riparian compaction:** Affect less than 10 percent of riparian soils.
- **Shrub utilization:** Use no more than 25 percent of current year's growth.
- **Tree regeneration:** Damage to less than 10 percent of seedlings and trees.
- **Visual/Appearance:** Subjective measure by lease administrator.
- **Shrub regeneration:** All age classes must be present in riparian areas.

- **Grass utilization:** Riparian grasses used to no less than 8 inches high; upland grasses no less than 4 inches.
- **Weeds:** No standard—note presence and species.

In addition to the performance standards, leaseholders are required to get an RMP approved prior to livestock turnout, include provisions for improvement of conditions over time in the RMP, monitor riparian conditions, and complete an end of the year report.

## ***Range Management Planning***

An RMP is a written record of the leaseholder's grazing goals and objectives, their plan of action to achieve the goals and objectives, and some form of measurement to determine if the leaseholder is successful. The RMP is a plan of action for the current year, and becomes a tool for future decision making and RMP adjustments. The grazing BMPs provide a sample outline for an RMP.

A toolbox of individual BMPs is provided to include in the RMP. Some of these BMPs are mandatory and some are optional. This system allows leaseholders to apply site-specific BMPs for their situation. In the list below, required BMPs are shown in *italics*:

- *Proper use and location of salt*
- Watering improvements
- *Fence construction and maintenance*
- *Appropriate season of use*
- Rotated pastures
- Riding (moving stock around)
- *Bulls on range*
- Armor watering holes on creeks
- *Proper number of animals*
- Yearling herds
- Rotating herds
- Upland wildlife considerations
- Vegetation rehabilitation
- Management at stream crossings
- Use vegetation to restrict movement
- Weed control
- Other BMPs identified by leaseholder

## ***Monitoring***

Monitoring involves a simple form and photo-points that are submitted to Plum Creek by the leaseholder. Environmental conditions must be monitored at several locations at least twice yearly. Monitoring lots should be located in environmentally sensitive areas and agreed to by Plum Creek's lease administrator.

## ***End of Year Reporting***

The leaseholder must prepare an end of year report that identifies the degree of environmental compliance, describes what worked well, and suggests modifications for the next year. If adequate progress is not made in attaining the performance standards or improving conditions over time, Plum Creek may require specific practices or may terminate the lease.

## ***Conclusion and Implications***

Plum Creek believes that forestry and livestock grazing are legitimate land uses, and, if conducted in a manner consistent with good stewardship of the land, are fully compatible with maintaining high-quality water and fisheries. The monitoring component of the grazing BMPs, and adaptive management research on BMP effectiveness, will help to assure that Plum Creek's environmental stewardship goals are met.